Unit .01

Session .01

God's Good World

Scripture

Genesis 1:1-15

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and
the earth. **2** Now the earth was formless and empty,
darkness covered the surface of the watery depths,
and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface
of the waters. **3** Then God said, "Let there be light,"
and there was light. **4** God saw that the light was
good, and God separated the light from the darkness.
5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he
called "night." There was an evening, and there was
a morning: one day. **6** Then God said, "Let there be
an expanse between the waters, separating water from
water." **7** So God made the expanse and separated
the water under the expanse from the water above
the expanse. And it was so. **8** God called the expanse
"sky." Evening came and then morning: the second day.
9 Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be
gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear."
And it was so. **10** God called the dry land "earth," and
the gathering of the water he called "seas." And God
saw that it was good. **11** Then God said, "Let the earth
produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees
on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to
their kinds." And it was so. **12** The earth produced
vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds
and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their
kinds. And God saw that it was good. **13** Evening came
and then morning: the third day. **14** Then God said,
"Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate
the day from the night. They will serve as signs for
seasons and for days and years. **15** They will be lights
in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth."
And it was so.

Intro Options

Main Point:
God created all things good.

Remember, this icon means there is a Leader Pack item that goes with the lesson. See Leader Pack for additional instructions.

Option 1

Plan ahead to bring tools and resources students can use to craft something. Examples might include artistic tools like colored pencils, paint and brushes, moldable clay, musical instruments (or musical apps on a smart device).

At the beginning of group time, instruct students to choose whatever tools and resources are available and make something from them. You can even pair students together or instruct them to work in teams. Whether individually or in groups, students may choose to draw a picture, paint a landscape, compose a song, and so on. After giving them some time to work on their projects, come back as a group and allow time for students to show what they made and why they made it.

After allowing time for students to showcase their work, explain that even though humans have incredible gifts of ingenuity to make or build—whether a work of art or even a jet plane—we don't have the ability to "create" in the truest sense of the word. Yes, we can make awesome things, but we use preexisting materials to do so—like paint or musical notes or the laws of physics. To *create* means *to bring forth something from nothing*, which is exactly what God did in the opening chapter of the Bible.

- **How would you explain to someone the difference between making and creating?**

Option 2

You will need the following supplies for this option: a small and shallow container (a lid on a small jar will do), four different colors of food coloring, a few ounces of milk (enough to cover the base of your container), dish soap, and a toothpick.

As you begin group time, explain to students that you will be doing a little science experiment. Begin by filling the lid or other container with milk (shouldn't take more than a few ounces). Next, apply one drop of each food coloring to the milk (try to separate away from each other if you can). Finally, take the toothpick you have, dip it into the dish soap, and then apply the toothpick to the center of the container. This will result in a spiral of colors as a chemical reaction takes place between the dish soap and the milk.

After the experiment, explain to students that discoveries like these illustrate the difference between making and creating. We made an experiment that resulted in a chemical reaction because we had preexisting materials to work with. However, to *create* is *to bring something into existence without the help of anything else*.

- **Do you think God made the universe or created the universe? Explain.**

TEACHING PLAN

Every world religion (and every individual in the world) has an idea of how the universe came to be. But this particular creation account stands out in one major way: God created everything out of nothing.

Read Genesis 1:1-2.

The phrase scholars often use for creation from nothing is creation *ex nihilo*, or *out of nothing*. God didn't start with any raw materials when He created. He wasn't just the master Shaper or chief Designer of the universe—in every way, He was the Creator.

- **Place students into groups and assign each group one of the following. How does God as Creator influence the way we understand who He is, who we are, and why we obey Him?**
- **God created all things from nothing (He is all-powerful). In what two areas of life does this help you trust Him?**

When God created everything, He began with a formless void and shaped it with His Word. In the same way, our lives are formless and void until God's Word comes in to bring life, peace, beauty, and order. Coming to God changes us deeply and eternally. By starting with chaos and darkness, God gave us a template for how He works in the world. He's powerful enough to create in an instant, but He most often uses a process.

- **Where in your life do you wish God would work faster?**
- **God makes us look more like Jesus through many different ways. Name some ways God has used the following in your own life: your church, youth pastor/leader, parents, and friends.**

God's story started out with a description of the universe and all that exists being formed out of nothing by a personal and sovereign God. The universe isn't eternal (even modern day science supports this), and it did not begin to exist because of other natural causes interacting in various ways. Getting this right is important: An impersonal force and a personal being are two very different starting points for creation.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 8, DDG)

Creation out of Nothing

The Bible teaches that God created the universe—all things visible and invisible—out of nothing. This is sometimes expressed in the Latin phrase creation *ex nihilo*. Nothing except God Himself existed before He created everything. God alone is eternal; every created thing has a beginning. Therefore, the eternal God rules over all of His creation and He alone is worthy of worship. Denial of this doctrine has implications for God's sovereignty over and providence in creation. Because God created out of nothing, creation has meaning and purpose and points us to the Creator.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God created all things good.

Genesis 1:1-2

1:1. This opening verse of the Bible—seven words in Hebrew—establishes seven key truths upon which the rest of the Bible is based. The essential first step in pleasing God is recognizing His existence (Heb. 11:6). Second, we must realize God existed before there was a universe and will exist after the universe perishes (Heb. 1:10-12). Third, God is the main character in the Bible. He is the subject of the first verb in the Bible (in fact, He is the subject of more verbs than any other character) and performs a wider variety of activities than any other being in the Bible. Fourth, as Creator, God has done what no human being could ever do. In its active form the Hebrew verb *bara*', meaning *to create*, never has a human subject. In other words, *bara*' indicates a work that is uniquely God's. Fifth, God is mysterious. Though the Hebrew word here for God is plural, the verb form of which God is the subject is singular. This may be a subtle allusion to God's Trinitarian nature: He is three divine Persons in one divine essence. Sixth, God is the Creator of heaven and earth. He doesn't just modify pre-existing matter but calls matter into being out of nothing (Ps. 33:6,9; Heb. 11:3). Lastly, God is not dependent on the universe, but the universe is totally dependent on God (Heb. 1:3).

1:2. The creation account raises many questions about the age of the earth, the timeline of creation, and the possibility of evolution—not to mention the ever-popular question about dinosaurs. Many Christians become passionate when discussing the finer details of these issues, assuming that anyone who disagrees with their stance is intellectually naïve or not aligned with Scripture.

While the finer details of these discussions do matter, we need to consider a broader question as we study the creation account in Genesis: Why was this passage written? When we interpret a passage of Scripture, the "why" question cannot be avoided. It seems rather obvious that the author of Genesis—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—wasn't focused on answering many of the questions we try to force on the text. The notion that God created is most important, not necessarily how long He created or how He went about it beyond the power of His spoken word.

In Defense (p. 10, DDG)

Read other ancient creation accounts and you won't find anything like the Bible's. In other accounts, the universe comes from something. One of the gods gives birth to the physical universe, or the world results as an accidental product of some cosmic battle. In one myth, the human race arises from the blood of one of the slain gods. In another, we are created from the remains of a dead sea monster. Most of the time, the human race appears to be an accident formed by larger divine forces that did not care about our creation or our destiny. Yet, in Genesis, everything started with one God who alone created everything out of nothing. He created with intentionality and ease. He took counsel from no one, not even the angels, who He also created. It all came from Him, and He made it out of nothing.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Genesis 1:3-13.

- **What stands out to you in these verses? Are there any patterns?**

The God who created such an immense universe and intimately knows every millimeter of it can't be thought of as simply "big." None of our words—not *big*, *great*, *wonderful*, *amazing*—could possibly come close to expressing the magnitude and power of a God who could simply say, "Let there be …" and suddenly, everything is.

The author of Genesis 1 didn't just want us to see the greatness of God's creation; he wanted us to see the goodness of it. Creation's goodness is an overflow of God's goodness. This is evident in the repeated phrase throughout Genesis 1: "God saw that it was good." In saying that creation is good, then, we are really saying that God is good. Still, it's more than that—we are making a claim about the nature of the created universe and our role within it.

- **What does "good" mean? Why did God call each step of His creation good?**

Activity

Write the word *good* on a white board or poster board centrally located in your room. Ask students to brainstorm on what the word *good* means, and why God would call each step of His creation *good*.

If students have difficulty thinking up answers, use the following prompts: Is it morally good? Yes, because when God created everything, there was no sin in it. Is it beautiful and pleasant to the eyes? Yes. We don't have to stare at the Grand Canyon or a sunset for long to realize that the work of creation is beautiful. Is it usable? Yes. When God created something and called it good, He was saying it performed its intended purpose and design well.

Even in creating a good world, God still created a world intended for change. God chose to call the world good, not perfect. Before the fall, God commanded humans to work with His creation to make it even better. Good can be improved upon; perfect cannot.

God created the world raw, in a good state so we could cultivate it for His glory and others' good. Adam and Eve were only the first people God expected to take the raw materials of His creation and cultivate them, but it's a cultural mandate all humans share.

Think about it this way: Contractors use sand and cement (raw materials) to create buildings. Artists arrange color and music (raw materials) into works of art. Writers mold words and ideas (raw materials) into great stories.

God created each person with a specific design, like He did with the sky, earth, and sea. Unlike those created things, human beings are given the charge to cultivate, modify, and grow. Wherever we are, we should ask how we can glorify God by using the raw materials of His creation for His mission.

- **Where has God gifted you? What specific ways can you use your talents for God's mission?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God created all things good.

Genesis 1:3-13

1:3-13. Creation's purpose and design is to declare God's glory and proclaim the work of His hands and to reveal things about God that are invisible to us, such as His eternal power and divine nature (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:20). Because of creation, we can see and understand these things.

Think about it this way: If someone you had never met walked into the room, you would still know certain truths about him before he even spoke. Without him actually "revealing" himself to us by speaking, we could look at him and make some accurate, general statements about him. Based on appearances, we might say he is approximately six feet tall, 180 pounds, strong, has brown hair and brown eyes, and is athletic. From appearances alone, your observations would be general, but still true.

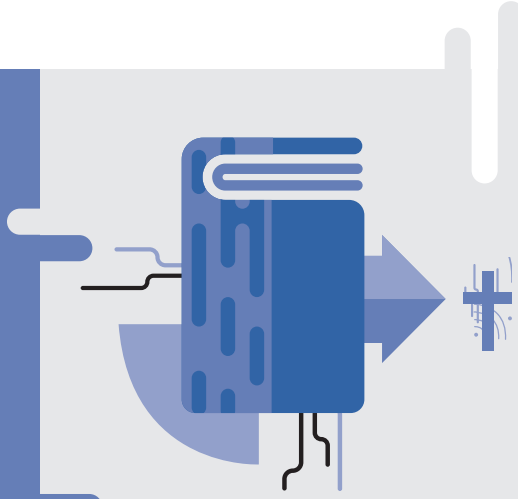
But for us to really know this person—to know his thoughts, character, intentions, and will—he would need to speak to us. He would need to tell us his likes/dislikes, his family background, his life experiences, and so on. In other words, he would need to speak.

In Genesis, the God of this universe began the good work of revealing Himself. He reveals Himself in His creation, allowing humanity to know things about the Creator just by looking at creation much like an artist leaves fingerprints on a work of art. He could have left us with this general knowledge. He didn't have to speak or make Himself known, but He did and still does. In fact, one of God's greatest acts of mercy toward the world and people is that He has spoken through His Son.

Jesus, the true Word of God, is the only force in the universe that keeps creation from unraveling. For example, this is evident in the plagues God sent to Egypt in the Exodus. Moses gave a word from God directly for Pharaoh, and when Pharaoh rejected it, the plagues began. At first glance, the plagues may seem like random cosmic punishments. In reality, they follow a pattern of creation unraveling: the Nile turned to blood, which destroyed the ecosystem; out of the Nile came frogs; from the dead frogs came gnats; from the gnats came disease. When God's Word is rejected, order becomes disorder, light becomes literal darkness, and goodness becomes terror.

(p. 9, DDG) Christ Connection

The apostle John opened up his story of Jesus' life by connecting Him to the creation story: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. … All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. In him was life, and that life was the light of men" (John 1:1,3-4). Where our lives have been destroyed by sin, Jesus Christ—the Word, the Creator—makes all things new. Your life may be the picture of chaos, but if Jesus can create everything out of nothing, He can surely re-create everything in you.



GOD'S GOOD WORLD

Genesis 1:1-15

GOD'S GOOD WORLD

God created all things good.

JESUS CONNECTION

John said about Jesus, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created." (John 1:1–3). Jesus is the very Word of God. He created all things, and all creation holds together in Him (Colossians 1:17).

LIFEWISE QUALITY

GRATITUDE – To appreciate what someone has done or given to me.

HEAD

Why is it so significant that God created everything "good," or perfectly?

What are some realities about the world God made that we can be thankful for?

HEART

In Genesis 1:1–15, God reveals Himself as a God of order, purpose and design. How might those qualities help us respond to stress or anxiety about our circumstances or about the world?

How we treat something shows what we really think about it. How do we treat something we are grateful for? How do we treat something we take for granted?

HANDS

We want to demonstrate our gratitude in how we treat our world. Choose one specific thing you will do today to preserve God's creation as a way to show gratitude for what He has made. Record what you will do and how it demonstrates gratitude. *Examples*: Pick up litter, don't use a plastic water bottle, walk or ride your bike for transportation, reuse plastic bags, compliment a friend on a unique gift God gave them, etc.